

BIRDS OF THE LALMAI AREA, NEAR COMILLA,
TIPPERA, BENGAL.

(Observed between December 1944 and end of July, 1945).

BY

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(With a map)

NATURE OF SURROUNDINGS.

Mainly open cultivations (paddy) which, during the winter months, are used for cattle-grazing. The fields are ploughed from February onwards, paddy being planted out between March and April, in readiness for the monsoons which break round about this period.

The whole of the area is sprinkled with villages or collections of habitations, usually each group having an earthen irrigation or water storage tank within its 'boundary'. The 'villages', in the main, are completely enshrouded by trees and bamboos, whilst a tangled undergrowth quickly envelopes the area during the monsoons.

Behind, and to the west of Lalmai station lies a series of higher levels stretching from south-west of Lalmai to the west of Comilla, and known to the military as 'The Ridge'. This area consists mainly of scrub-clad hillocks, with minor cultivations in the lower intervening levels or valleys.

There is only one river of any size, known as the 'Gungiajuri Chara' to military authorities, which either rises in or flows through the ridge, passing eastwards under the railway about 5 miles from Comilla, then turning south to loop round under the railway again about a mile below Lalmai on the Chandpur side.

For further details, see accompanying sketch-map of the area, although this is *not* drawn to scale and cannot be vouched for as accurate.

FAMILY : CORVIDAE.

Corvus macrorhynchos : Jungle Crow.

Common and plentiful. Five nests found up to the middle of April, but only one considered to contain either young or eggs, judging by the reactions of the crows to our attentions. The nest site was, unfortunately, not possible to investigate, being placed in the top of a 'Palmyra' palm some 25 feet above the ground.

Nesting activities appeared to commence again in July, as most of the crows from the vicinity of our camp could be seen flying up into palms or other tall trees carrying what seemed to be pieces of coconut fibre and sticks.

The jungle crows were always present with the mixed company of birds whenever the winged termites were on the wing during January. Their methods of catching the termites varied from clumsy attempts to catch the insects on the wing by using their bills like the drongos, etc., to the more certain method of assembling on the ground close to the place where the termites were emerging, and catching the insects before they took to the air.

I was never able to find the roosting places of these crows, although they could be seen flying eastwards every evening from 17-30 hrs. onwards.

These birds were among the first abroad in the mornings.

***Corvus splendens* :** Common Indian House Crow.

The house crows were confined to the area around Comilla township up to the first week in May, when they started to frequent the many military camps in the Lalmai area. The first time the house crows were noted in our camp was on 9 May, when ten were seen in the vicinity of the African cookhouses. Five were again seen on 16 May, and then from the beginning of June and all through July, the house crows were well established.

***Dendrocitta vagabunda* :** Tree-pie.

Fairly common in our vicinity, but more often heard than seen. Immature birds were seen in June and July, but no nests were found.

The tree-pies occasionally assembled with the 'termite-hunters' during January, on one occasion as many as 20 being seen. They also frequented the silk-cotton trees whilst these were in bloom.

These birds were amazing for their variety of calls. Some of the notes were as follows:—

- (i) A repeated 'Ki-cha-cha-cha'.
- (ii) A harsh chuckle, rather similar to some calls used by broody domestic hens.
- (iii) A very musical, soft 'Toodle-li', sounding rather like the limpid notes of a vibraphone.
- (iv) A harsh 'Care', similar to but not so guttural as those occasionally used by jungle crows.

FAMILY : TIMALIIDAE.

***Turdoides somervillei* :** Jungle-Babbler.

The jungle-babblers were confined more to the scrub-clad hills lying behind the camp in an area known to the military as 'The Ridge'. In the small area of the ridge that I visited, one party was seen on two occasions. Each time the birds were moving around in the thicker bushes and on being alarmed flew off in single-file to other clumps.

Later, in May, when that part of the Ridge was being used for military camp sites, I saw three babblers on a small knoll a short distance behind our camp, and although I frequented this area almost every day, I did not see them again.

***Aegithina tiphia* :** Common Iora.

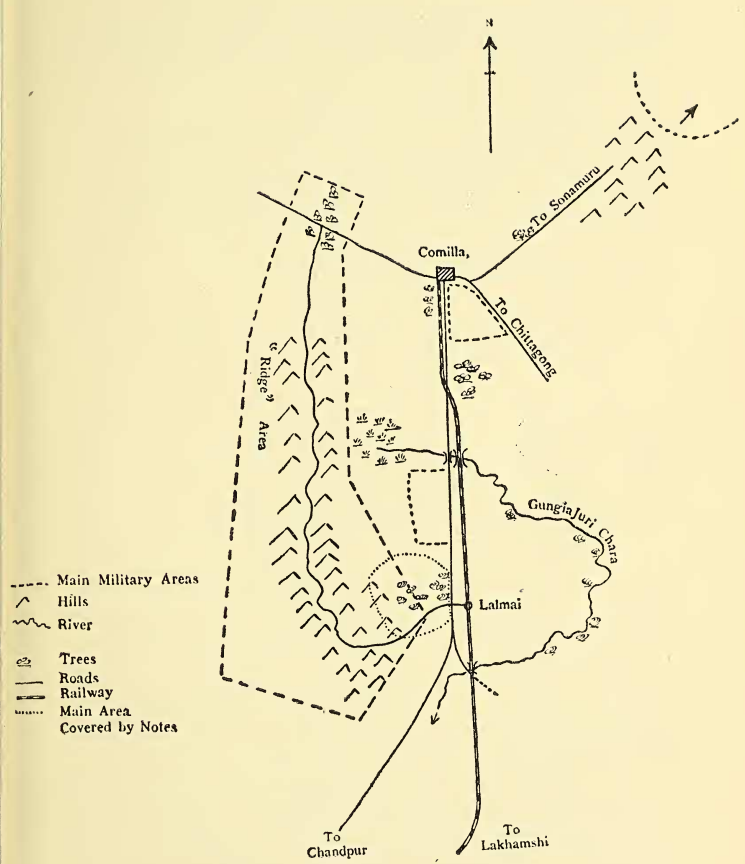
Common and fairly plentiful from December to February. Mostly seen in parties of a dozen or more, feeding or hunting insects in bushes and bush-like trees in the camp area. From March onwards, the parties seemed split up, and the Ioras were more frequently seen in pairs or singly until July, when family parties were seen about.

No occupied nests were found—the only indication of them having bred were the family parties and one old nest found on the ground under a mango tree, this being cup-shaped, about 2 inches in diameter, composed of fine fibres and plastered externally with cobwebs, thus giving the nest a white appearance.

FAMILY : PYCNONOTIDAE.

***Molpastes cafer* :** Red-vented Bulbul.

Common and plentiful. One of the party that assembled at the silk-cotton trees whilst they were in bloom, and also seen occasionally with the 'termite-hunters' during January.



Rough sketch map of Lalmai Area, near Comilla, Tippera, Bengal.

Four nests found, three containing clutches of three eggs, situated in forks of trees or preferably among the dense young shoots sprouting from a sawn-off branch of a tree, and varying in height from 6 ft. to 16 ft. above the ground. Nests were found in early April, and were of the normal cup-shaped fine twig construction, lined with grass or fibre.

Otocompsa jocosa : Red-whiskered Bulbul.

Seen once only on 29 July. Might have been overlooked, but only one specimen was seen for a few moments early in the morning, and this was very difficult to approach.

FAMILY : TURDIDAE.

Copsychus saularis : Magpie-Robin.

Common. There were two or three pairs in our area, usually seen feeding on the ground under the line of mango trees. One nesting site was seen, the birds (on 15 April) were gathering nesting materials and carrying them to a natural hollow in a mango tree about 5 ft. from the ground. The site, unfortunately, was wrecked by some Indian children before the nest was completed.

Young birds, capable of flight, were seen towards the end of May, June and early July. Two immature birds were the most seen at once with the adults.

Magpie Robins were sometimes seen during January with the 'termite-hunters', taking the insects on the wing. Morning 'song-posts' were usually the tops of fairly tall trees, whence a clear vision was obtainable.

FAMILY : LANIIDAE.

Lanius excubitor :¹ Grey Shrike.

By no means common in the Lalmai area, although they move about so much that it is difficult to follow these birds. The usual haunts are tall, lightly foliated trees, thorny trees and occasionally the low scrub bordering the paddy fields.

Seldom seen in more than pairs and most frequently seen singly. There was no sign of breeding activities up to the first week in July, when the last record of the bird in our area was 4 July, but these may have been overlooked.

Lanius vitatus :¹ Bay-backed Shrike.

Fairly common from February to April, but disappeared from the area in May—last recorded date being 7 May.

More than the other shrikes, the Bay-backed was seen mainly in the scrub bordering the paddy fields, usually a single bird dominating a paddy field. The most seen together was three.

Tephrodornis pondicerianus : Common Wood-Shrike.

Common in our area. One nest found on 14 April, situated on a horizontal branch of a tree between 15 to 20 ft. above the ground, in full view of the whole camp, but not noticed by me until one of the pair was seen entering the nest to brood the young. The nest contained three young, two of which, a month later, had left the nest and could be seen being fed by the parents during the evenings in the vicinity of a clump of mango trees.

As far as I could discern, both birds fed the young, each adult undertaking to feed one chick. The chicks were just starting to fly (13 May), and were being 'taught' by the parents, who would make a short flight to a nearby branch, calling all the while, and in the event of the young not

¹ The sight record of these two species must be accepted with reserve. They are both birds of fairly dry—even semi-desert—biotopes. The former has only been recorded as a straggler as far east as Calcutta, and the latter not quite so far east.—Eds.

following, would return to them and repeat the performance until such time as the youngsters followed along. This particular evening a hawk of some sort perched in a nearby tree. One of the parents attacked the hawk immediately, swooping on it and uttering a harsh grating noise, the snap of its bill being audible as it passed over the hawk's head, but it failed to move the bird. The one parent was then joined by its mate, and the concerted attack put the hawk to flight.

When the adults brought food to the young, the young gave noise to an excited chatter, accompanied by much wing quivering. As the two young were a little distance apart, they were either led in rotation by a single adult or individually by one of the parents. The excitement of the young was only evident when an adult was approaching, the remainder of the time they stayed motionless.

FAMILY : DICRURIDAE.

Dicrurus macrocercus : Black Drongo.

Common. A total of ten nests were found between April and the beginning of June, all of them used, and varying in height from 12 to 25 feet above the ground, situated in a horizontal fork of a tree. Young birds, just able to fly, were seen from 26 May onwards.

These birds were most pugnacious during the breeding season, attacking larger hawks, vultures and even human beings with equal ferocity, if they considered their nest was in danger.

The drongos were by far the latest birds to roost at night, and among the earliest risers. When it was almost dark, drongos could be seen and heard having 'mock battles' over the tops of the mango trees.

These birds were invariably present with the 'termite-hunters' during January.

FAMILY : SYLVIIDAE.

Orthotomus sutorius : Tailor-Bird.

Common but not plentiful. Seen in Comilla and Lalmai area but only recognised as such in April. A pair continually frequented a clump of mango trees near our quarters and were far more often heard than seen. One of the pair had a curious habit of roosting in the lowest branches of the mangoes under a leaf, at about 4 to 5 ft. from the ground, and this habit eventually enabled me to have it caught one night about 8 p.m. It was caught by hand, identified and released. On release it struggled so much that it lost several of its tail feathers, and although it never left that particular clump of trees, it could always be identified by its few remaining tail feathers. No nest was found, although I watched the bird carefully for a long time.

FAMILY : ORIOLIDAE.

Oriolus xanthornus : Black-headed Oriole.

Present but not common. Two or three pairs in the area. Three nests were found in the vicinity of the camp, two of which I suspected as belonging to the same pair. The first nest found was situated in a bamboo clump, about 7 ft. from the ground and contained one egg on 24 March. The egg hatched out between 27-28 March and the chick was covered with spine-like feathers during the first week in April. On 9 April I found the nest torn to bits and the chick had vanished.

The second nest was found on 8 April, situated about 10 feet from the ground in a shrub-like tree overhanging the edge of a paddy field, but appeared to contain no eggs. The female was sitting on the morning of 9 April and by that evening there were two eggs in the nest. The nest was unattended on the morning (08.15 hours) of 15 April, and had been wrecked by the morning of 19 April (human efforts suspected).

The third nest was built in our camp, about 8 ft. from the ground, but must have been destroyed by our men when they were 'cleaning up' the camp area, as it disappeared shortly after completion, although no eggs had been laid.

FAMILY : STURNIDAE.

***Sturnia malabarica* :** Grey-headed Myna.

Most common in the camp area whilst the silk-cotton trees were in bloom (March to May). They were first seen in the camp area on 14 January, and during February were using the mango trees for roosting at night. From February until May large numbers of them would assemble from 18.00 hours onwards, and appeared to have some trouble in settling down for the night, as frequently a 'cloud' of them would suddenly leave the trees and fly round for several minutes, executing all sorts of manoeuvres prior to settling in some other tree nearby.

During these months, the mynas were only seen in the daytime whilst there were silk-cotton trees in bloom, otherwise I first saw them at roosting time.

No actual nests were found, although individual birds were seen investigating barbet and woodpecker holes.

The Grey-headed Mynas made up the bulk of the birds which regularly visited the flowering silk-cotton trees.

***Acridotheres tristis* :** Common Myna.

Common and plentiful. Always present in the camp area, particularly near kitchens, stores and messes.

These birds were very tame and would allow quite a close approach. They appeared to have a curious habit of standing around in little groups, fluffing up their feathers and nodding to each other.

Eggs were found in one nest situated under the ridge of a roof on 21 April. Other nesting sites were suspected in the leaves of palmyra palms, being situated at the base of the fronds close to the trunk. Mynas were seen carrying nesting materials to these sites and later also food, but no nests so situated were actually seen by me.

On two occasions common mynas were seen feeding young koels, and due to the open nature of the paddy fields, it was possible to watch one pair feed one young koel continuously from 17.30 hours until darkness rendered further observations impossible. This particular young koel was larger than either of the mynas, and quite capable of fairly sustained flight. We hustled the young koel some distance away to see if the mynas would follow it, and they did. Not having seen the nest of this pair, with the koel in it, I am unable to state definitely that the koels do parasitize the mynas.

Another example was seen about a fortnight later when a pair of young koels (one fairly large and the other only just able to fly) were being fed by another pair of common mynas. Here, too, a prolonged watch revealed the same pair of mynas feeding the two for over a hour. Here, too, a pair of mynas had been suspected of nesting in the same date palm where the two young koels were found, although a search of the palm only revealed remnants of a nest situated close to the trunk of the palm, and constructed of grass.

Another peculiarity about the common myna, noticed particularly from May to July, was that some of the birds appeared to have a yellow wattle-like streak running through the crown of the head. Whether this is some plumage phase of the immature birds, I do not know.

***Æthiopsar fuscus* :** Jungle Myna

Not very common, although possibly overlooked. One nest site found, situated in a hole in the trunk of a tree about 10 ft. from the ground, but the hollow continued for some distance down inside the tree trunk, and it was not possible to see whether there were any eggs in the nest or not. This was in the middle of April.

During May, June and July, parties of between 6 and 20 were occasionally seen on the ripening paddy or in the trees growing on the banks of the paddy-fields.

***Sturnopastor contra* : Pied Myna.**

Common and plentiful. Numerous nests were built in the trees in our camp during April and May, many being destroyed by the high winds and heavy rains. There was nothing of outstanding interest about the structure of the nests, although the sites chosen (on outer extremities of slender branches) were in many cases courting disaster and were duly destroyed by the elements later on in the season. One noticeable point was the number of broken eggs found under the nests, but whether these rolled out with the swaying of the trees or were knocked out by the mynas themselves, I never did learn. A lot of young, unable to fly, were also found on the ground, and my attempts to revive one chick found under a tree during a rainstorm was a failure.

The Pied Mynas were well represented on the silk-cotton trees whilst they were in bloom, but for the main part were seldom seen so near to human habitations as were the common mynas, preferring the more open cultivations and neighbouring trees.

One amusing little part of their behaviour is that of perching close together and uttering their grating calls in each other's ears, noticed especially when the birds are paired off for breeding. These birds seem almost 'colonists' during the breeding season, although the most nests seen in one tree were only a dozen.

FAMILY : PLOCEIDAE.

***Ploceus philippinus* : The Baya Weaver.**

Common. The Bayas were first noticed as common when they started to don breeding plumage. Nests were built in colonies mainly in palmyra palms, but some were seen in thorny trees. The materials used varied from grass to split streamers of date-palm leaves. 'Cock' nests appeared plentiful in every colony. Great amusement was derived from watching these birds unravelling and stealing materials from neighbouring nests in the colony.

***Uroloncha punctulata* : Spotted Munia.**

The Spotted Munias were most in evidence from the end of May to July, when they were starting nesting activities.

One bird was seen on 25 December, but it was not until the beginning of June that the birds were seen with any regularity.

The nests were untidy grassdomed arrangements, built mainly in thickly foliated small trees, some being seen in the few thorn trees in the camp area, and one in an *Albizia stipulata*.

From this period, small parties of 4 or more could be seen feeding on the seeds of grasses.

FAMILY : FRINGILLIDAE.

***Passer domesticus* : House-Sparrow.**

Common and plentiful, though more so from February onwards, when nesting operations were in progress. The chief sites used by the House Sparrows when building appeared to be under the ridge of the bamboo-shingle roofs.

A certain amount of difficulty was experienced in identifying these birds in the field, as although large flocks of sparrow-like birds were often seen on the paddy fields, it is quite probable that these birds were mistaken as weavers, and vice-versa.

FAMILY : HIRUNDINIDAE.

***Hirundo daurica* : Striated Swallow.**

Red-rumped Swallows were seen on two occasions only. First on 12 April, a number were seen sporting about over the camp during the afternoon, and disappeared towards evening.

On the second occasion, on 14 April, two were seen circling about over the camp, fairly high up, for a few minutes.

On both occasions the weather was sultry.

FAMILY : MOTACILLIDAE.

Motacilla alba : White Wagtail.

One pair seen in the camp area on 16 December. Another pair seen on the Sonamuru side of Comilla on 20 March, on the edge of an irrigation tank.

Motacilla cinerea : Grey Wagtail.

One seen on 3 April and another on 23 April, feeding on the bank of an irrigation tank close to our camp.

Anthus rufulus : Indian Pipit.

Fairly common throughout my stay in this area, although more frequently seen during April than any other month.

Main haunts appeared to be the paddy fields prior to final ploughing and planting.

Was told that one nest had been found at the edge of a paddy field, but before I could get to see it, the torrential rain had washed it away.

FAMILY : NECTARINIIDAE.

Cinnyris asiatica : Purple Sunbird.

Fairly common, although more noticeable from February onwards. No nests found, although adults seen with young towards the end of April. These birds moved about a lot, and were only in real evidence in our camp when the trees (including silk-cotton, mango and *Albizia stipulata* and Indian laburnum) were flowering.

Witnessed part of what might have been a courtship display on the afternoon of 16 March. I could not be certain whether the male was chasing the female, or vice-versa, because I was rounding a hut when I caught sight of their downward flight to earth. Stepping clear of the building, I saw the female on the ground, lying or leaning back with one wing held upwards into the air, whilst the male stood back, with extended head and neck, 'pointing' first one way and then the other (left to right movement). There was a flutter, and the pair were both in the same attitude as was the female originally, with their tails (apparently) touching or together. While this was going on both birds kept up a feeble chirping. The pose was held for a matter of seconds only, then the female flew off, closely followed by the male, who was in full song.

The whole 'performance' was only of a few seconds' duration, and due to being caught unawares and on the wrong side of a building, I was unable to see the preliminaries or finale of the act.

Cinnyris zeylonicus : Purple-rumped Sunbird.

Fairly common, though not plentiful, from March onwards. Seldom more than one pair seen during the course of a day. Have met with it both in Comilla, along the Gungiajuri Chara, and in the Lalmai area.

Young birds seen with the adults during April and May.

FAMILY : DICAEDIDAE.

Dicaeum erythrorhynchos : Tickell's Flowerpecker.

Seen on several occasions in the vicinity of clumps of the parasitic loranthus. Possibly one pair of flower-peckers inhabited the area around our camp, but the numbers were difficult to gauge due to the scattered localities of the loranthus.

One pair seen in Comilla township, and another seen in the vicinity of habitations along the banks of the Gungiajuri Chara.

Family : PICIDAE.

Dryobates mahrattensis : Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker.

Fairly common, and certainly the most common of the woodpeckers found in the area.

Micropternus brachyurus : Rufous Woodpecker.

Seen on three occasions only—first on 17 May in a bamboo clump, where two (adults ?) were seen close to an insect carton-nest which had a large opening in one side, whilst two (young ?) were clinging precariously to a nearby bamboo. The two birds near the insect nest were feeding on ants (*Crematogaster* ?).

On 16 June, a pair of (adult ?) Rufous Woodpeckers were seen in the mango trees in camp, one bird having a crimson patch below the eyes, whilst this feature was lacking in the other.

On 2 July, one bird was seen in the bamboo clump, but I could not see whether the eye-patch was present or not.

Brachypternus benghalensis : Golden-backed Woodpecker.

About two pairs seen in the area. No nest actually found, although one bird was seen investigating a hollow-branch on a silk-cotton tree.

lynx torquilla : Wryneck.

Seen four times only, firstly on 4 March, when it was observed feeding at the base of a mango tree. On 11 March, a specimen was brought to me which had been shot in the camp area whilst on the trunk of a sapling.

On 23 and 24 April, a pair were seen in the vicinity of the irrigation tank behind our camp, feeding on the ground under the trees.

Family : CAPITONIDAE.

Megalaima lineatus : Lineated Barbet.

Not very common. Heard continually through March and into April, when one pair was constructing a nesting site in a 'silk cotton' tree some 25 ft. above the ground. This nesting site was disturbed, and although the birds had been working on it for nearly a fortnight, they deserted the site and moved over to a tree-enshrouded habitation about a quarter of a mile away.

There was a definite difference in the call-notes of the pair during March and early April, one bird having a far more resonant call than the other, but as no specimen was obtained apart from one caught in a net and released again as soon as identification was certain, it is impossible to state which sex possessed the loudest, most continuous notes. The other bird, when calling, seemed to utter a half-hearted version of the loud call.

Whilst the nest mentioned above was under construction, one bird roosted at night on the site, whilst the other roosted in a small tree nearby.

Megalaima haemacephala : Crimson-breasted Barbet.

Not very common. One pair was found with a nest in an old tree behind the camp area. Whether eggs were laid and young raised, I do not know, as the nest was never investigated. Barbets were seen entering, emerging or resting with only the head showing through the entrance to the site.

Curiosity made me count the number of times the coppersmith utters his monosyllabic note—204 continuously uttered notes was the highest, whilst three occasions of 121 (one minute duration) and two of 50 (half-minute duration) were noted during the course of one afternoon.

Family : CUCULIDAE.

Clamator jacobinus : Pied Crested Cuckoo.

One bird each was seen on three occasions—on 24 May, when a solitary bird was seen feeding on a black, hairy caterpillar; on 4 June, when one bird was being

mobbed by common mynahs; and a brief glimpse of one on 16 June by the side of the Lalmai-Comilla road.

The birds were silent and as these were the only occasions this species was noted during the period I was in the district, I feel safe in saying that it was certainly not a resident; possibly a straggler or may have been passing through.

Eudynamis scolopaceus : Indian Koel.

The koels were first seen on 18 February, but their calls had been heard on 16 February. On 18 February two males only were seen, whilst the first female noted was on 10 March. These birds were calling up till the end of July, when I left the area.

The male appeared to have a deeper call than the female, and the characteristic call of *Koel* was being voiced by the male whenever I managed to locate the owner of the voice. The 'water-bubbling' call was heard several times, and although I was unable to see the bird responsible, the tone indicated a male. The main call uttered by the female, according to my notes, was the harsh, querrulous *key-key key*.

No actual eggs of koels were ever found, but the normal foster-parents, the Common House Crow, was not breeding in the area where I was stationed. Mention has already been made of the young koels I saw being fed by the Common Mynahs.

The status of these birds was rather difficult to gauge in this area, but I doubt whether more than two pairs were present.

Centropus sineasis or Centropus bengalensis ? Crow-Pheasant (or Lesser Coucal?).

Heard continually from the end of April up till the end of July, when I left the area. One bird was seen on two occasions only, and this was in a small clump of bamboos, after the bird was spotted calling from the tops of one of the trees.

Other cuckoos were present in the district, but I was unable to satisfy myself as to their identification. One might have been the Plaintive Cuckoo, a bird uttering a 'one-two-three-four' call from April to early June, and another was possibly the Common Hawk-cuckoo.

Family : PSITTACIDAE.

Small flights of paroquets were seen on several occasions, once in the area in question, and several times on the Sonamuru side of Comilla, but no firm identifications were made.

FAMILY : CORACIIDAE.

Coracias benghalensis : Indian Roller.

Not very common. One pair at the most were seen, and then mainly in the mixed company assembled whenever the termites were abroad. There was one bird frequently seen haunting the lightly tree-clad hillocks and paddy fields near our camp area during the latter part of June and July.

FAMILY : MEROPIDAE.

Merops orientalis : Common Bee-eater.

Common and fairly plentiful up to February. The numbers then diminished around the camp area and the birds were to be found further afield until May, when family parties were in evidence. In April, six nests were found, one being opened on 22 April which contained six hard-set eggs. Some days later I found a fledgling that had strayed from the nest, evidently prior to a shower of rain, as it was almost buried in loose sand some yards from the nest. It was still alive, so I returned it to the entrance, and was pleased to see it scamper away down the hole.

A lot of the bee-eaters were without the elongated central tail feathers both before and after the breeding season.

Large numbers of green bee-eaters roosted in tall bamboos near Lalmai station, and were often seen out hawking insects in fairly large parties towards late evening, although the parties were considerably smaller during the day. They were also among the birds present when the termites were abroad, and were on several occasions seen to take butterflies on the wing, apparently swallowing wings as well as the insects.

***Merops superciliosus* :** Blue-tailed Bee-eater.

Four birds seen once, on the morning of 28 March at 07.15 hours, one hawking insects and three others perched nearby. These were possibly stragglers or on passage, although it is difficult to say, as I neither saw from what direction they came or vanished.

FAMILY : *ALCEDINIDAE*.

***Alcedo atthis* :** Common Kingfisher.

More common during the rains but not plentiful. Immature birds noted during early June.

***Halcyon smyrnensis* :** White-breasted Kingfisher.

More common than the above species but not plentiful. Most in evidence during the ploughing of the paddy fields and during the rains when the fields were flooded.

Occasionally present with the termite-hunters.

FAMILY : *UPUPIDAE*.

***Upupa epops* :** Hoopoe.

Only seen from 23 February until last recorded date on 19 April. The greatest number seen were four pairs in a radius of a mile, on 18 March. There is every possibility that under normal conditions the hoopoe would be well represented in this area but intense military activities must have driven quite a lot of birds further afield due to continual disturbances and the erection of numerous buildings in their normal habitats.

FAMILY : *MICROPIDAE*.

***Cypselurus batassiensis* :** Palm-Swift.

Common and plentiful. Nests found on the underside of palmyra fronds during May, usually attached to the same fronds as were the Baya weaver nests. The birds were more noticeable during April and May, especially towards evening, when numbers could be seen circling the palmyras, uttering their faint calls.

FAMILY : *CAPRIMULGIDAE*.

***Caprimulgus indicus* :** Jungle Nightjar.

One specimen obtained on 24 July 1945. The only nightjar seen by me in this area, although possibly overlooked on other occasions. Two parasitic flies of the family *Hippoboscidae* (identified by Dr. Chopra of the Zoological Survey of India as being *Olfersia* sp.) were found among the feathers of the bird a few minutes after it was killed.

FAMILY : ASIONIDAE.

Athene brama : Spotted Owlet.

Two pairs (or one family?) resident in the area, and seen occasionally every month throughout the period I was stationed there.

These owlets were quite often to be seen during the heat of the day, perched motionless among shady branches, but always betrayed their presence by bobbing up and down when conscious of being observed.

Owners of a weird assortment of catcalls and chuckles.

FAMILY : AEGYPTIDAE.

Sarcogyps calvus : Black or Pondicherry Vulture.

Fairly common throughout the period in question, but seldom seen in more than threes or fours.

In spite of their size and pugnacious appearance, these were often successfully put to flight by jungle crows, and frequently attacked by black drongos during the latter's breeding season.

Pseudogyps bengalensis : White-backed Vulture.

Common and plentiful. Always seen in far greater numbers than the preceding species.

Seen on several occasions standing on the ground in groups with wings outstretched, in the manner of cormorants.

FAMILY : FALCONIDAE.

There were several birds of the genus *Falco* seen in the area, but as I am particularly weak as far as the identification of this family is concerned, no mention will be made of any particular type. These birds were by no means common, an occasional bird being seen at widely scattered intervals and only for a few moments, as it beat over the paddy fields.

Haematornis cheela : Crested Serpent-Eagle.

One pair seen on several occasions in flight over the area. At other times, one bird was seen perched in small trees, sometimes calling, but the call was mostly uttered whilst on the wing.

Haliastur indus : Brahminy Kite.

Fairly common, though not seen in more than pairs. Confined mainly to stretches of country where there was water, and consequently more often seen when the paddy fields were flooded.

Occasionally seen among the termite-hunters.

Milvus migrans : Pariah Kite.

Common and plentiful up to the end of May, when most of the birds disappeared. Stragglers were seen into June, but by the beginning of July there were no kites to be seen in the area.

One nest was located in the top of a palmyra, containing an almost fully-grown fledgling on 24 March. Towards the end of April and May, a lot of the kites were noticed with brown and white mottled plumage.

The common pariahs were always in attendance when the termites took to the wing, catching the insect with their feet and carrying it straight to the bill in one continuous move.

Family : COLUMBIDAE.

Columba livia : Blue Rock-Pigeon.

Common and plentiful around the small villages or groups of dwellings in the area. Whether the birds seen were all true blue rock-pigeons, I am in